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ENG 3100G-001: Cultural Foundations I

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Cultural Foundations I
 English/Philosophy 3100G
 Section 001 TR 1100-1215 Coleman 3170

Dannie Otto/Michael Loudon
 Fall 2010

Course Description: This team-taught, core-curriculum course centers on three five-week segments, introducing distinctive cultural foundations by studying primary texts. The first segment examines the foundations of Western culture in classical Greece and Rome. Among the themes to be discussed are the differences in mythic and rationalist world views, relations between mind and body, concepts of reality versus appearances, and the development of tragic dimensions in humanity. Readings from the Greeks will be taken primarily from Homer, Sophocles and Plato; those from the Romans will be primarily from Virgil.

The second segment will examine Jewish and Christian foundations for Western culture, drawing on readings from the Hebrew Bible and continuing to trace the development of Judaism. As the segment unfolds, the foundations of Christianity and its development in the Medieval Church, in the Protestant Reformation and in the modern period will be discussed, with readings drawn from the New Testament.

The third segment introduces Sub-Saharan African cultural foundations in contrast to the earlier emphasis on Western culture. The segment introduces traditional African culture by examining late 19th C. Ibo culture in Nigeria through a reading of the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. To conclude the segment, a short novel by Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o and a long poem by Ugandan Okot p'Bitek will enable students to explore the relationships between colonizing and colonized cultures and to reflect on the impact of Western culture upon non-Western, African cultures.

Requirements and Grading: The course format will be informal lecture and exploratory discussion; course requirements will consist of three essay examinations (20% each, including the final) and two five-to-six page essays (15% each) [90%] as well as participation (10%)—consisting of discussion, quizzes and written responses to reading assignments.

To encourage preparatory reading, regular (on average, once a week) short writing assignments on the assigned reading or short quizzes will be given. These will be several paragraphs in length and will address some aspect of the reading assignment, will be due (or given) at the beginning of class and will not be accepted on a make-up basis. Quizzes will generally consist of one or two paragraphs on a straightforward question based on the assigned reading. Both will be returned marked with a check to show acceptable performance or an X to indicate unacceptable performance. These assignments/quizzes will not be factored directly into the final grade percentage, except as an element of participation. They are, however, a *required* part of the course, and a student who does not complete them *will not have met the course requirements*. Students will be allowed three missed assignments or inadequate quizzes.

All course materials to be graded will be divided equally between the instructors, rotating sets for subsequent assignments until the end of the term. (Group 6 in the English Department requirements.)

Texts:

Homer, *Iliad* (trans. Robert Fagles)
 Grene and Lattimore, ed., *The Greek Tragedies*, Vol. I (2nd ed.)
 Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. I (*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Meno*, *Gorgias*, *Menexenus*); (trans. R. E. Allen)
 Virgil, *The Aeneid* (trans. Robert Fagles)
 New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV edition
 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
 Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol*
 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The River Between*

Course Format: As instructors in a team-taught interdisciplinary course, we shall provide introductory contexts for our readings through lectures and responses that we hope will provoke your questions and comments so that discussion can become an integral aspect of our time in class. Exploring these traditions in reference to Western philosophical issues and literary themes whenever appropriate, we encourage you to relate your questions and perceptions to your own experiences and beliefs by focusing on differences and similarities. What are the implications for these systems of thought? Do these cultural ideas and traditions help illuminate current socio-political and cultural events?

Office Hours: Dannie Otto/Phone: 581-3063/Home: 365-9674/Office: Coleman 2280
 email: dlotto@eiu.edu; TR 8:00-9:00 & 12:30-1:30;
 Michael Loudon/Phone: 581-6312/ Office: CH3361
 email: mdloudon@eiu.edu; TR 1:00-2:00; W 1:00-3:00;
 and either or both instructors by appointment

The Close Reading Cooperative (CRC): Every student enrolled in ENG/PHI 3100G.001 must subscribe to the Close Reading Cooperative, a podcast in literary studies produced here at Eastern in order to help you stay in practice with some of the skills you'll build this semester. Practice makes perfect, and the CRC is intended to keep you in practice by pushing to your iPod, iPad, laptop, or other iTunes-equipped device a weekly lesson in literary analysis. You should watch these episodes, practice the skills they impart, and understand that these skills are important to the development of critical reading and thinking skills. Instructions for subscribing to the Close Reading Cooperative appear on the English Department's website: <http://www.eiu.edu/~english/>.

General Policies:

Grading Standards: We shall follow the EIU English Department Guidelines, distributed in class. We shall use the plus and minus to distinguish, say, a high B from a low one.

Attendance: We do take roll and we evaluate attendance only indirectly in the context of your participation in the course.

Conferences: These are at your request unless we ask to see you. Please ask for help as soon as you feel you need it; please don't wait until the last couple of weeks of class.

Submission of work: Essays should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, titled and indicate the following: name, date, and course and section number. Exercises and quizzes must be legible.

Late Essays: For each day that the essay is late, the letter grade will fall by one full grade: an A essay due on Friday will be an F by the next Thursday. If there are particular difficulties, please see one of us.

Electronic Writing Portfolio (EWP):

English/Philosophy 3100G is a writing intensive course. **This means that you may need to submit an essay from this course for your EWP.** If so, you must inform Professor Otto or Loudon no later than the last week of class--EWP submissions are not accepted after completion of the course, and **you are responsible** for consulting the web site of Center for Academic Support and Achievement for instructions. See <http://www.eiu/~assess> for more information and to download submission forms.

Plagiarism: The English Department Policy

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If we discover an act of plagiarism, we shall exercise the right to the fullest extent possible. (See <http://www.eiu/~judicial/code.html> for more information.)

Please note: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.